

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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COME-00 EB-07 LAB-04 SIL-01 TRSE-00 OMB-01 /082 W

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FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7662

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

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AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LONDON 19709

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, SOCI, UK

SUBJECT: TWO SMALL NOTES OF CHEER: BLASTFURNACEMEN SET-
TLE AND BMA RECOMMENDS RETURN TO WORK TO JUNIOR
DOCTORS

REF: (A) LONDON 19675; (B) LONDON 19317; (C) LONDON 14737
(D) LONDON 19341

1. THE BRITISH HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE TO CHEER ABOUT
THIS CHRISTMAS -- WITNESS, FOR EXAMPLE, THE CONTINUED
SHARP RISE IN UNEMPLOYMENT (REF A) AND THE LARGE SCALE
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CUTBACK IN CHRYSLER OPERATIONS (REF B) AS WELL AS THREA-

TENED REDUNDANCIES IN OTHER MAJOR INDUSTRY AND SERVICES SUCH AS STEEL AND TRANSPORT. HOWEVER, THERE ARE TWO SMALL -- ALTHOUGH IMPORTANT -- NOTES OF CHEER: A SERIOUS DISPUTE OVER MODERNIZATION IN THE STEEL INDUSTRY (REF C) HAS BEEN RESOLVED AND THE JUNIOR DOCTORS ARE EXPECTED TO END THEIR "EMERGENCY ONLY" DISPUTE OVER PAY WHICH HAS HOBBOLED THE NATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE (REF D).

2. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF BLASTFURNACEMEN AND BRITISH STEEL CORPORATION HAVE REACHED A COMPROMISE OVER THE INTRODUCTION OF A HIGHLY MODERN BLASTFURNACE WHICH BSC INSTALLED AT ITS LLANWERN STEEL WORK BUT WHICH HAS REMAINED IDLE SINCE FEBRUARY. THE DISPUTE CENTERED AROUND THE DEMAND BY THE UNION FOR HIGHER PAY RATES TO MAN THE NEW FURNACE, AND THE COMPROMISE SETTLEMENT WILL GIVE THE HIGHEST-SKILLED BLASTFURNACEMEN 94.50 POUNDS A WEEK NOW AND 99 POUNDS LATER WHEN THE FURNACE REACHES OPTIMUM PERFORMANCE. AT FIRST GLANCE, IT WOULD APPEAR THAT THE SETTLEMENT STRETCHED THE 6 POUND WAGE LIMIT BUT THE BSC'S NEGOTIATOR, GORDON SAMBROOK, ARGUED THAT IT DID NOT NEGATE THE GOVERNMENT'S PAY POLICY SINCE IT INVOLVED "A PIECE OF NEW PLANT AND WE HAVE HAD TO FIX NEW RATES FOR IT."

3. THE BLASTFURNACEMEN'S SETTLEMENT WAS REACHED WITH THE AID OF THE ADVISORY CONCILIATION AND ARBITRATION SERVICE (ACAS) WHICH LOOKED INTO THE DISPUTE LAST SEPTEMBER WHEN IT THREATENED TO DISRUPT THE ENTIRE STEEL INDUSTRY AS THE UNION HAD THREATENED A NATIONWIDE STRIKE (REF C). THE END OF THE DISPUTE OF COURSE WILL AID CONSIDERABLY THE BSC'S VITAL MODERNIZATION PROGRAM. HOWEVER, PROJECTED CUTBACKS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE INDUSTRY -- WHICH UNION LEADERS CHARGE WOULD REDUCE THE WORKFORCE BY 40,000 -- WILL CREATE SERIOUS LABOR-MANAGEMENT TENSION EARLY IN THE NEW YEAR.

4. THE DOCTORS' DISPUTE: THE JUNIOR DOCTORS' DISPUTE

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OVER PAY -- IS NOW EXPECTED TO END EFFECTIVELY BEFORE
THE NEW YEAR OR SHORTLY THEREAFTER ALTHOUGH THE CONSUL-
TANTS' DISPUTE -- OVER PAY BEDS -- CONTINUES. A BMA
NATIONAL COMMITTEE REPRESENTING JUNIOR DOCTORS RECOMMEN-
DED YESTERDAY (BY A VOTE OF 38 TO 9) THAT THE JUNIOR DOC-
TORS SUSPEND THEIR INDUSTRIAL ACTION ON THE BASIS OF THE
GOVERNMENT'S OFFER (REF D). ALTHOUGH THE DOCTORS ARE TO
VOTE ON THE RECOMMENDATION REGION BY REGION OBSERVERS BE-
LIEVE THAT THE VOTE WILL BE AFFIRMATIVE IN A MAJORITY OF
THE REGIONS. ONE OF THE MOST MILITANT GROUPS -- REPRE-
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SENTING NORTHWEST HOSPITALS -- HAS ALREADY ADVISED JUNIOR
DOCTORS IN THEIR AREA TO RETURN TO NORMAL WORKING IMME-
DIATELY.

5. THE OTHER DISPUTE BY SENIOR DOCTORS -- OVER PAY BEDS --
REMAINS UNRESOLVED, ALTHOUGH THE BMA IS POLLING ITS MEM-
BERS ON A COMPROMISE PROPOSAL PUT FORWARD BY LORD GOODMAN,
A "GO-BETWEEN" IN THE MATTER AND A FRIEND OF THE PRIME
MINISTER. THE SCHEME INVOLVES A FORMULA TO REDUCE THE
NUMBER OF PAY BEDS IN A PHASED WAY, WITH THE EMPLOYMENT

OF AN INDEPENDENT REVIEW BOARD. THE GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO PROVIDE GUARANTEES ON THE RETENTION OF PRIVATE PRACTICE IN THE UK. THE BALLOT RESULTS WILL NOT BE KNOWN UNTIL ABOUT THE END OF JANUARY. MEANWHILE THE "EMERGENCY ONLY" SERVICE, ALTHOUGH IT HAS NOT BEEN AS WIDESPREAD AS THAT OF THE JUNIOR DOCTORS, CONTINUES.

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